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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#) [SUCCESSION](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: SPEAKER PREDICTS FEW CHANGES IN
NEW GOVERNMENT; PROUD OF PARLIAMENT ROLE IN TRANSITION

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a February 6 meeting with the Ambassador, National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi said the Amir would decide "in the coming few days" whether or not to keep the Prime Minister and Crown Prince positions separated. (Note: The positions were separated for the first time since independence in 2003. The Amir is expected to name a new Prime Minister by the end of the week. End note.) He explained the advantage of continued separation was that it allowed the Crown Prince to avoid the "day-to-day problems of Parliament"; on the other hand, relinking the two positions would give the Prime Minister the protections afforded constitutionally to the Crown Prince. He noted, however, that whoever ultimately filled the position(s) was more important than their separation or relinkage.

¶2. (C) Al-Khorafi said there was "no chance" a non-ruling family Prime Minister would be appointed at this juncture in Kuwait's political evolution, despite some political associations' urgings, which he said carried "no weight." He noted, however, that this could be a more serious possibility if and when official political parties were permitted. Although he refused to predict who would be nominated for either position, Al-Khorafi said the ruling family was particularly desirous to avoid division after the recent succession controversy. Al-Khorafi predicted there would be "not much change" in the new Government.

"All's Well That Ends Well"

¶3. (C) Characterizing the recent succession controversy as "the most difficult task" he ever confronted, Al-Khorafi commented, "All's well that ends well." He continued: "We proved though the transition process that democracy is a solution, and that the (Kuwaiti) Parliament is a real institution and not just there for decoration." He hoped members of Parliament (MPs) would capitalize on the "good reputation, respect, and prestige" gained from Parliament's prominent role in the transition process to strengthen the legislative role and make progress on key legislation.

Political Reforms on Parliament Agenda?

¶4. (C) The Speaker confirmed that discussion of proposals to reduce the number of electoral constituencies had been postponed until June, and noted that the longer it was delayed, the less likely it was to be passed before the 2007 parliamentary elections. On the Press and Publications Law, Al-Khorafi said the Government had accepted judicial, rather than Cabinet, jurisdiction over grievances, removing the "major obstacle" to passage of the legislation. He admitted, however, that "certain groups in Parliament" want to delay the law. He confided to the Ambassador that he himself

worried about people opening dailies without proper oversight, and possibly being exposed to external influences by depending on financing from abroad.

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LeBaron